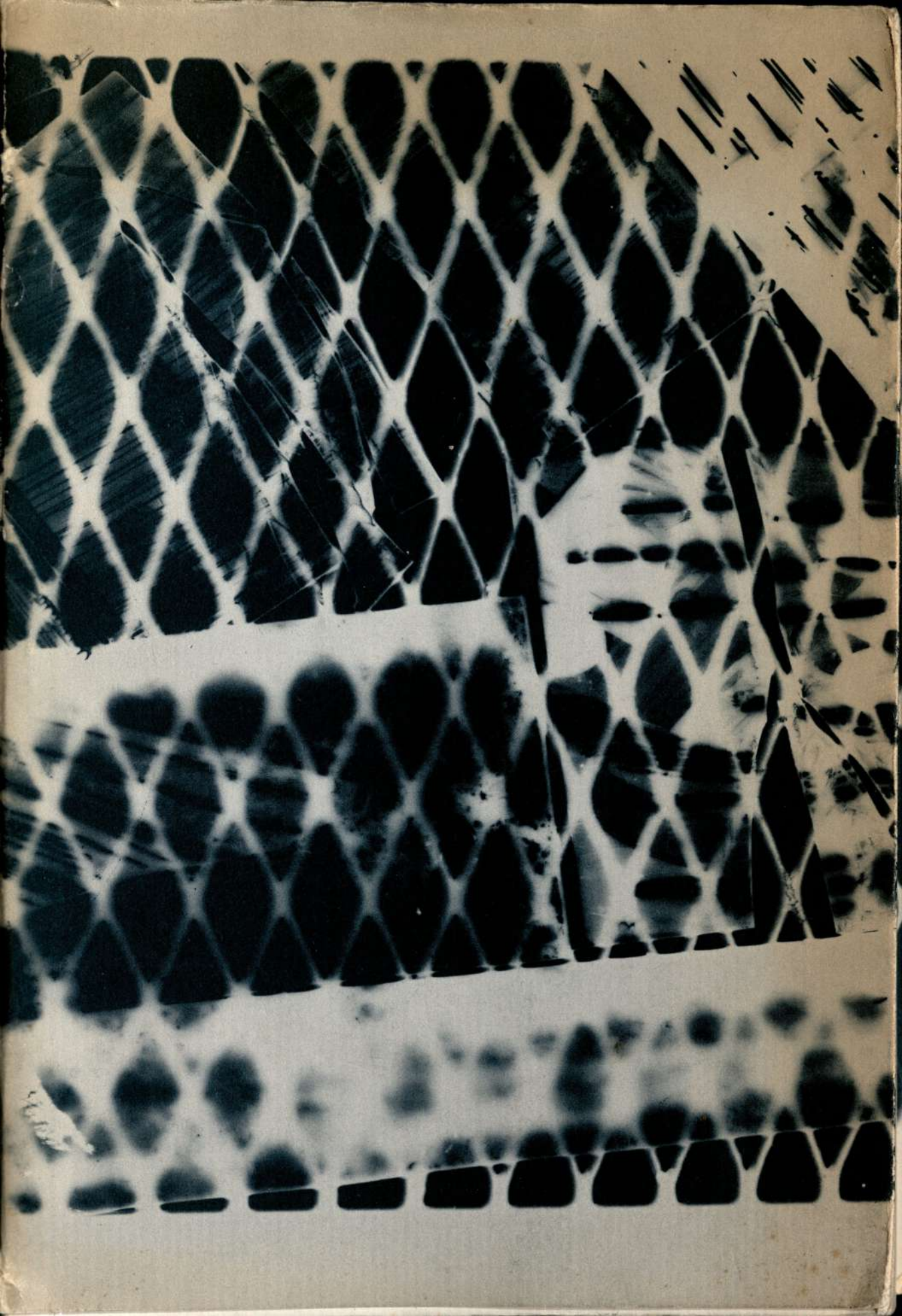

ON THE PERIPHERY

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Veronica Forrest-Thomson

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PREFACE

The mysteries of this book are partially summed up in its title. After the head-on collision with non-poetic languages in my previous work I was faced by a stylistic situation on the periphery of traditional poetry. The sequence of pieces here represents—apart from their individual merit—a series of strategies for dealing with this difficulty. A difficulty which must confront any poet at this time who can take and make the art a new and serious opponent—perhaps even a successful alternative—to the awefulness of the modern world. I have argued elsewhere that this awefulness cannot be overcome with entire reference to the non-verbal world for the non-verbal world, like other deities, helps only those who help themselves. And what poetry gains from that world is gained through language, through the very languages that give us the world. For poetry, as always, has special access to aspects of language distinct from the aspect of communication. These simple, and very complex, mechanisms have been largely lost in English poetry since the 'twenties. So that my concern with French poetry and poetic theory and with ideas associated with "Structuralism" is a manoeuvre of style, of verbal detail, as well as a manoeuvre of theme and of social significance.

Hence the graph of this book begins in the extreme of aleatory poems, moves into simple lyricism confronting the claims of the external world with stylistic simplicity, reaches, in "The Dying Gladiator", an extreme of both technical and thematic complexity, and ends, in "The Lady of Shalott", by recapturing the right to speak directly through the traditional ranges of rhymed stanza.

The turning point comes in "Pastoral" where I realise in practice what I have long known in theory: that it is precisely those non-meaningful aspects of language—rhyme, rhythm and stanzaic metre are only the most obvious —which are poetry's strength and its defence. What had been tendentious obscurity of meaning becomes, therefore, a tendentious refusal of meaning, except the minimum needed to create verbal form at all, this coupled with a more assured and more traditional formal experimentation in the two Odes, the epitaph on Ezra Pound, the assertion of affinity with the past of English poetry, especially the neglected past of the late nineteenth-century, in "Strike".

Thus "The Lady of Shalott" is both the end of this quest for a lost imaginative freedom made actual in verbal detail and a beginning which, freed from sterile self-absorption, will move on to create new artifices of eternity. Thus also, the last poem "Sonnet" is the love poem I have tried throughout to write straight and have been held back from by these technical and sociological difficulties. For, as to theme, this book, is the chart of three quests. The quest for a style already discussed, the quest for a subject other than the difficulty of writing, and the quest for another human being. Indeed such equation of love with knowledge and of the idea of style as their reconciliation is as old as the art itself, for the other person is the personification of the other, the unknown, the external world and all one's craft is necessary to catch him. And, of course, being caught as a poetic fiction, as a real person he is gone.

And so one is left with the poems—what they do and what they suggest as possible. "For us there is only the trying / The rest is not our business".

VERONICA FORREST-THOMSON

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In defense of Leavis: the common pursuit

the:
the mentioning—run
ubiquitous, Victorian, similar
chism.
Shall topoi, conventional
—momentarily—
elaboration?

Had they conceits?

In defense of Graham Hough: style and stylistics

Study Linguistics
to texture received: reader
unity
literary
Literary General
to impression: strivings, as—
the language
kind
technical
imagery
Different is a close: the
"of we literary"

The transcendental aesthetic

cannot of
—of time subjective—
against the
—the that

limited?

Note
These three pieces are aleatory poems. They were constructed by noting the last word on the top left-hand corner of consecutive pages in, respectively, *The Common Pursuit* by F. R. Leavis, *Style and Stylistics* by Graham Hough, and Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. The words thus obtained were then arranged as juxtapositions of contexts from which, by following certain conventions of poetic reading, meaning could be obtained. The justification of this enterprise is the fuller knowledge thereby gained of all our processes of understanding—especially—very contemporary poetic techniques. And for this reason they are placed at the beginning of this book.

to R.Z. and M.W.

the figure of

our two friends in

the darkness of

our familiar city

walking with

their arms around

each other

"perhaps"

how is *this*

relationship "going":

between

two friends and

the figure:

the familiar city of

each other

walking.

On Naming of Shadows

Thus the morning's shadow of
a pigeon's wing
became pretext for each darkness
in the day,
for the naming of wings and
moths and move-
ment of leaves, justified each
by its shade.

I have actually just two
elements, platinum and
chromium, also some uninterpreted
spectra, a box
of them, lying around, more
than I can
fit into a formulated crystal
the colour of

leaves (green) pigeons (multi) moths
etc. It is
a jump of several orders of magni-
tude from shade
to this: a ray of light enter-
ing a tourmaline, split up in
two ways
one, the ordinary, perpendicular
the other,
extraordinary, parallel, vibrates
to the prin-
cipal axis of a bifurcated
obsession.
Its general appearance (the stone)
colourless and

clear, or black and opaque; but
(the jump)
also various shades of brown
red, yellow
green, blue, banded hues where
we deal
not with absorption, but emission, for there
is visible, light.

Selection restrictions on peanuts for dinner

Tenacity was sticking to the topic
of blankets
and walnuts, French: noix
noisette: a hazel nut.
One word can include two unities:
the difficulty
is to recognise when this is the case:
a little nut; or take
blankets: the weave of two senses
under them
makes nothing of six-term dinner
table textures
but do they, even securely tucked
at the corners,
comprehend a unity?

Sweat is not more impure
than tears;
and indeed it is often followed by them.
The words
were too hot for blankets
or unity.
An acorn developed into every oak.

For the spider who frequents our bath

First there is secure, scuttling
in the rustic darkness (
the waste-pipe, no
Freudian repository)
which lacks only a corner
to hang a web on.

But the end is enamelled
allegory; its dazzle (
a white field for
Chaucerian spring)
which coloured globes of
Bubble-Bath do not evade.

L'effet du réel

We like watching the sea going away from us
and also retreating certain promises the sky held:
of breaking waves.
Now, this is the regular "Norman landscape",
mist rises through straight-planted trees.
We like watching the road going away from us
in ripples yellow like "specks of foam"
and also retreating certain by-roads from this fracture
of events.
We construct an event out of, behind these shutters "people"
are sleeping.
and from an intersection between "the most perfect chateau of the transition
period"
and "a cricket on a ball of dung". Our capacity
for indifference is truly astounding
Until the rock
will turn to
air at a ruin-
ed tower
and we step
over its sill
the doors and
sills of light.

So would you mind just standing in the café doorway
for a minute longer against the sun because I'm
writing a poem about intersections (the doors and sills of light)
between the mind and stone, imagination and reality; and because
everything's fine for my palms drip sweat and all the leg muscles
tremble so nicely in the unconstructed event of such a journey.

We do not watch with complacency the sea retreating, leaving
the stonework stranded in its imaginary light like
your shadow in the café door. So again laughter muscles
go through their contractions nicely, for it's all right;
you can move now. Such savage triumph returns us to Maillezais.
The abbey stand still, without quotation marks.

An arbitrary leaf

Printed in natural colours, we find a way always
to deny the world; even its "aerial view" from
"the tower itself". A biro-cross marks the place
where our arcades and buttresses dissolved in air;
but still it is a "carte-postale de luxe" bought as
reminder of an "extraordinary experience".
These occasions have a way of multiplying.
The treads uneven, between steps with "five-hundred years of wear";
and darkened to an height of—wouldn't you say—
about the same number of feet. This would never be allowed
in England: such sudden and insouciant lack
of the next step. Give me your hand.

Shall we exorcise the colours that contrast us
with the evening walk? Any next walk must be this one,
now that we have given it the article, consciously
evoked in word and gesture: our shadowy design to
undermine the objects on our path.
So that this dead leaf, in lack of colour and
perfected shape is like fan-vaulting discerned
in the abbey—communication having been accepted—
But no finality in such a text can justify
a reference to Clement and his castle, Villandraut.

Pfarr-schmerz (village-anguish)

Making love and omelettes

For every poem ought to contain
at least one zeugma

we may discern a very
palpable corner of a
sheet. Like love it

It ought to; and since "is"
may be derived from "ought",
the sheet, the situation and
ourselves exist (see Proc. Arist. Soc.
supp. vol XCCCI)

is like the palpable
light set square
in wooden tapestry

stained glass (see La Sainte Chapelle)

like irony discerned
in fan-vaulting.
Interlocking rings
of glazed perception
turn in our eyes and
fingers, to be unravelled, Chinese

It was, therefore, quite right
of Chiang Hen to write down
the text only. For if the student
concentrates and uses his mind
he will discover the process
between the lines (see, *The
Unwobbling Pivot*, trans. E.P.)

puzzles. Have you
seen the minnows
in the steel-dust,
the rose, the magnet
leaves, in the mere?

Irony as an acceptance of limitation
is our natural approach to the divine
(see, Elizabeth David, *French Provincial
Cooking*)

If we are going
to get up we ought
to get up, and

Thus we are derived from "ought"

eat our glazed
perceptions in
the form of
croissants, leaving
the palpable corner
to the sheet.

To seek mysteries in the obscure, poking into magic and committing eccentricities in order to be talked about later—This I do not.

The Dying Gladiator

Di pensier in pensier
from impasse to impasse, from Christmas tree
to jelly-fish, stranded on the sandy bed
of the semiotic sea, his network in the dust;
his vehicle for macroscopic structures,
dismembered by bicycle handlebars
as we crossed King's Parade

Did someone speak to me?

From valley to valley;
his eyes upon his native hills, every
marked path hostile to the tranquil life

Of reassurance in physical properties
like chrysanthemums in a yellow jug

where mist folds knots in nodes
of light, in the multivalence
of an implicated calculus
but *torn* out of our hands
by his entangled fish-spear

like the date on the calendar or
a chair for someone I love to sit
reading, or a new salad-bowl

from mouth to ashtray
from thread to needle,
from

A point of light that reaches through
water to the sea-bed where
like carnivorous anemones
we open

leaning on an elbow,
he dies

and close.

Drinks with a mythologue

Le vin est objectivement bon mais la bonté du vin
est un mythe. The veins are obviously bloodless
but the blood in the veins is mine. A vision
of ordinary beauty resembles the v in the mind.
The v is obvious in but. It makes beauty
in verbs a myth. Vacillations of opening blood
burst the beauty of v that is mine. V
in an ordinary bottle is the breakdown of verbs
in the mind. Violent and opening beauty, the bursting
of verbs is a myth. Violence objective and but
is this beauty of veins in the mind.

"If you smash that glass, my dear, you know
you'll simply have to sweep it up again afterwards.
And anyway it's a waste of good wine!"

Address to the reader, from Pevensey Sluice

If it were quicksand you could sink;
something needing a light touch
soon and so simply takes its revenge.
Slightly west of Goodwin Sands
the land hardens again with history,
resists the symbol.
Chalk requires an allegorical hand,
or employee of Sussex Water Board
who sets a notice here:
DANGER SUBMERGED STRUCTURES
and all at once Transformational Grammar
"peoples" the "emotional landscape"
with refutation.
You may hear its melancholy
long withdrawing roar
even on Dover beach watching
the undertow of all those trips
across to France.
Follow the reader and his writer,
those emblematic persons
along their mythic route
charting its uncertain curves and camber;
for to be true to any other you must—
and I shall never now—recover
a popular manoeuvre known mostly as,
turn over
and go to sleep.

On the periphery

Ducks flee into the undergrowth
like eponymous heroes as we approach
the past, walking slowly on a path
beside a water-way or something.

These stories are committed to memory
and writing only when they have reached
a high degree of sophistication (we
have reached). Sanctioned and solacing
polythene buttercups strew our way
with images of "natural"
regeneration, inevitable.

Somewhere the table's set far from the traffic
jam, thus she spoke, turning, mov'd
the third heaven, that popular memory.
So many images now set revolving and
oh, that reminds me (poetry functions
as tribal mnemonic) who are we
having for dinner tomorrow.

The Aquarium

Many pills, Matilda, does that make tonight?
But you *must* tell if you take the yellows.
The eyeball, listless under its tiny lid, moves
so slowly that downstairs in the cloakroom
were four rubber boots *all left feet* (this is a
Pedestrian Controlled Crossing but read as you
may you will find no mention of fish) covered even
ly with blood (groping in mud for a sound) whoever
however (and a collision is highly likely to occur)
controls the eyeball ignores this collision and takes
many yellows without telling any; hangs over books
brooding on mud. I, therefore, have nothing to add
to the scene transcribed above and the word that is
murder will fit very well. Over the boots but under
the eyeball are raincoats and hats and quotation
marks all wet through (or with name if you wish
to make plain the pills that we take for our)
into the garden it passes suffused now with pain
like an evening in spring the garland so fresh
and the roses so sweet she gave with intent to perceive.
Freckled by a glance the glass flickering advanc
es away into greenery untouched by the sun. Moreover
the grass also is green, so slowly the eyeball
did turn bloodshot in its emptying socket.

Note: see Roland Barthes: *S/Z, l'empire des signes*
Denis Roche: "Leçons sur la vacance poétique"
in *Eros energumene*
Alain Robbe-Grillet: *La jalousie*
and Nathalie Sarraute: *Le planetarium*

On reading Mr. Melville's *Tales*

When sunlight wounds me I think of thousands
it has killed on crowded beaches stripped like
knives whetted for sacrificial your hand is on my arm
your lips are on my cheek your eyes are on my eyes
whence water drips theories since Plato strolled
along those shores we have not seen such de
constructed presences of speech and sense so run
the traces through our history like scarlet woven in
a sailor's rope to say it is the King's (is any simile
more inappropriate) generally disseminated like take
O take your hands off me in the civilisation of the West
who ruled the evil and the good (some say that Claggart
is the devil) Shall I be cold and dead my love shall
I unweave the thread but we have superseded such banal
dichotomies as these or shall I join the rest in
holding off the meaning from the form lines present in inter
textual strands I should not like to hang despite Platon
Like Billy Budd my heart would stop; it has stopped;
the differment remains, remains and

Note: see Herman Melville: "Billy Budd, Sailor, an inside narrative"
Jacques Derrida: "L'écriture at la différence" and
De la grammatologie
Julia Kristeva: *Semiotike: recherches pour une sémanalyse*
and William Empson: "Missing Dates", passim.

Approaching the Library

You never would have believed it could be so easy;
it played into one's hands, the unpremeditate paysage,
as Stevens said, crossing the fen, suddenly confronted
with such expanse of unpretentious waters as visit
our dreams. Elle resta, comme le dit Flaubert,
mélancolique devant son rêve accompli.

Poetic diction performed for me two outstanding services:
in confirming that the subject I proposed treating
was a worthy one; and in feeding and clothing me
after I had, in a moment of abstraction, fallen
into Holme Fen Engine Ditch;

It partakes of the clay's history of human blood
and strife, like Devil's Dike, our excursion to which
is hereby premeditated. Thus we are rescued from
the abstract ditch we dig with our fundamental
disagreement about the proper form for a picnic.

It is disturbing to fine oneself on a level
with the river, smooth-flowing with pronouns
where we grub, like ducks, for whatever they eat,
in unexpected pools. A drastic diminution
of pronouns in the early weeks of marriage
(lack of third persons, not to mention more banal examples)
leads to this retracted meadow in which comparisons
must be deployed, the meadow she crosses now,
noting its blossoming synecdoches, on her way
to the library, carrying her *Heffers Cantab Students*
Notebook, ref. 140, *punched for filing.*

Leaving the Library

These daffodils are piston-rods which turn
faster and faster carrying (me). Insomnia
results from coffee and stimulating
company. Toilet rolls oscillate wildly
in all the cubicles as the train gathers
speed, etc. And so much for that image.
Exuberant pronouns flourish like baroque
cherubs in the spring air beckoning.
It would be possible to contact the
"actual world" if they flourished more
like the threatening anonymity of real
children, stumbled over in a street.
But this grace is denied (me).
Shoulder your skis or your umbrella and
glide with the pronouns over the bridge
past daffodils thumping like your
insomniac's heart, your shopping bag
is filled with the week's supply of
toilet rolls, which is a kind of integr-
ation between the image and reality.

Facsimile of the waste land

And if Another knows I have a little nut-tree cultivated indoors
I know that in this climate nothing will it bear
despite much watering with sighs and tears.

I know little of horticulture but a silver anguish
supplemented by sundry domestic details not Christmas tinselled
and a golden fear of succumbing to the violet typing-ribbon,

Who only know that in return for the kiss you gave to me,
not here, O, Adeimantus, but in another world,
there is no more noise now I hand you the fruit of

More than a year struggling with the violet and the orange peel
which is so alien to my little nut-tree embedded
in the present context of its final version.

Note: the lines:
"And if Another knows I know I know not
Who only know that there is no more noise now"
were omitted by Eliot from his final version, along with:
"Not here, O, Adeimantus, but in another world".

Pound was fond of using a violet typewriter ribbon.

Pastoral

They are our creatures, clover, and they love us
Through the long summer meadows' diesel fumes.
Smooth as their scent and contours clear however
Less than enough to compensate for names.

Jagged are names and not our creatures
Either in kind or movement like the flowers.
Raised voices in a car or by a river
Remind us of the world that is not ours.

Silence in grass and solace in blank verdure
Summon the frightful glare of nouns and nerves.
The gentle foal linguistically wounded
Squeals like a car's breaks
Like our twisted words.

Not pastoral enough

homage to William Empson

It is the sense, it is the sense, controls,
Landing every poem like a fish.
Unhuman forms must not assert their roles.

Glittering scales require the deadly tolls
Of net and knife. Scales fall to relish.
It is the sense, it is the sense, controls.

Yet languages are apt to miss on souls
If reason only guts them. Applying the wish,
Unhuman forms must not assert their roles,

Ignores the fact that poems have two poles
That must be opposite. Hard then to finish
It is the sense, it is the sense, controls,

Without a sense of lining up for doles
From other kitchens that give us the garnish:
Unhuman forms must not assert their roles.

And this (forgive me) is like carrying coals
To Sheffield. Irrelevance betrays a formal anguish.
It is the sense, it is the sense, controls,
"Unhuman forms must not assert their roles".

Le Signe (Cygne)

Godard, the anthropological swan
floats on the Cam when day is done.
Levi-Strauss stands on a bridge and calls:
Birds love freedom; they build themselves homes;
They often engage in human relations.
Come Godard, come, here, Godard, here. The halls
of Clare and Trinity, John's and Queens'
echo the sound with scraping of chairs
and cramming of maws. A red-gowned don
floats by the swan. We must try to explain
to the posturing dancers that this is an image
of human existence; this is the barre-work
of verbal behaviour; this knife in the corpse
that they shove through a window to float
down the Cam when day is done
is Godard, the anthropological swan.

Conversation on a Benin Head

You must come to terms with T. S. Eliot
If you are doing the twentieth-century.
At Girton my gloves and my heart under
My gloves. Word as they chanceably fall
From the mouth change colour whatever
The source, pages or brain or midway
Between window and chair. These colours,
Brown wood air grey ink black, we didn't
Create them. We don't believe they are there
Whatever they are or this is a dagger.
We *know* it's a dagger or nothing whatever:
A scream, a sentence, a phantom, a reading
Of Laing. Believe that my neck is supported
By circuits of communication, gold rings,
I know that and hundred in number remember
Believe that my throat will collapse; flat
Nose and fat lips disintegrate quickly under
Your touch. Listen. I know it's a dagger.

Whatever it was I didn't do it.

A man must do something. If one
Thinks of other however the chances
Of seeming to cover a single event,
Not in the mind of the doer, the point
Of departure is hard to recover. It all
Goes to clothes and the moves
Of the wearer infinite in number
Between window and bed and he
Turned as he said it all goes to show
You have never been whether
Reluctant to swallow the trace of another
Or touch at your own. We'll collect
Them tomorrow. Such monuments over
The gathering quick of your pink
Little finger furrowing under the bone
Of my skull. Own this armour at least,
This stylistic skeleton caught in the last arabesque

but one.

The ear of Dionysios: Ode

for Linda Sparkes

Below the Greek amphitheatre
on the left of the Roman stadium
beyond the cord-makers grotto,
the monument thus named is found
to be one of the greatest engineering feats
of the ancient world. It was designed
for Dionysios, tyrant of Syracuse,
as a dungeon whence his prisoners' voices
would reach 1000 ft to his own less
permanent tympanum. If the tourist
will try the experiment he may hear
his own words echo throughout the
vast moist aperture. But Dionysios doesn't
listen any more. Je suis la victime et le bureau.

You are not like me; you are Giselle, Odette in this world of similar asparagus (and no crummy puns on corps de ballet from the audience; take your filthy words off her) or a waitress with a Cockney accent. You are not like me; you are me in any of these roles and your hair is not golden but brown if I want it to be, and your body, mine in the bath.

All eras of decadence are as similar as asparagus; and I intend no references to Dowson's paedophilia, Swinburne's algolagnia or Symons' cabaret dancers. These are monetary transactions scented with white heliotrope.

Still white heliotrope
topic of still waters which run deep
when you are rowing
towing a growing sense of fear of
tropes in the boat.
You can't return to the other shore
for it is before
you rowed roamed and jumped
into the tangled isles.
We are getting over-heated
and a second driver is risky
nevertheless refill the flask in Loch Ness
despite no road on the other shore.
And mother rows
over the scent in the bath.
It was a steep descent, helio
was nothing to it.
Stagnant waters run deep and half and
you had better let me steer clear, dear
though I am ignorant of sailing and
the steering veers

from shore to shore, I can give you
metaphor for metaphor
any day and get away along the
coastline of literary peaks
and threatening summits (Ben Ezra etc. — my
crummy puns)

In places the mask slips the man shows clear
with his bigotry hatred and fear;
and in others his passionate tender heart?
No, I fear art's a hard thing, my dear,
there one sees just the greatness of art.

and plant their superfluous road-signs
long before for it is before
as aforesaid and 'who
are you anyway' said Mr. Ashbery before
who *lives* in New York
(another 1400 ft peak)
if you are mother or the other
I can offer you no hope
therefore perhaps however you are:

The dancer who is avatar with golden hair
of everyone who has been lost. Should I not share
her weary elbow on the barre. Rossetti
might have gestured thus. He named her this.
Yesterday she lost her bra. Some fetishists
are more banal than I who envy tears and sweat
for bleeding toes in satin shoes, enchainement
(Yeats') from mind to tree, but can't leap out of irony.
That they keep grace with such as she.

Le pont traversé: Ode

an estimated 75% of Chinese restaurants
in Paris are used as cover for spies. De spies.
Replies to official questions were various,
ranging from "we used to have some spies but
they left; they didn't say where they were going;
every restaurant has its ups and downs"
to "sorry, no spies, but very good Peking duck".

Je suis la victime et le bureau.

Memorial to the deportation. Whose? Jews. Yours. Ours. I
consider this an insult to my staff about whom I am most particular;
there are no spies here; anyway spies don't exist.
White blocks black lines stone by steel grille by grille line by
line across the white and black block of the page.
There has been a new edition true to the new edition. (No God but
confusion and Pound is its prophet; it floats on the sterling
market. I smell a rat; I see it floating through the air; but I
shall nip it in the bud. Ring-ring-a-roses, all fall down.) There
has been a new edition of *L'histoire de la folie* which costs too
much; and in order to change your travellers cheques you must return
whence you came (a bench in the Luxembourg gardens) and know the
place for the first time. Deconstruction
costs too much; le silence des siècles m'envahit; le tourbillonnement
des siècles m'envahit. Il n'y a rien à te faire peur dès que tu
monte ou que tu descend la tour de Notre Dame de Chartres. Montez-
vous ou descendez-vous? She has a lightning-conductor on her back
and from the tower you can see into the men's urinal (and know the
place for the first time). I've never known what this fish was
called in English, lieu; plaice? This is in memory of Max Jacob,
paysan de Paris à paraître. Apparaîtra le pari et la paresse d'être
de la vie. La paresse des siècles m'envahit avec son révolver aux
cheveux blancs: animula vagula blandula hospes comesque corporis
quae nunc abibis in loca pallidula rigida nudula nec ut soles
davis iocos. Facilis decensus averno, this commemoration. But even
Breton refrained from firing the revolutionary revolver. Revolving
of revolution makes a priest always available; and you can teach its
candles to burn bright. Facilis decensus averno in deportation in
memory of Max Jacob. Rest in peace with the priest of revolution.
Quos nunc abibis in locos? Les billets ne sont plus valables au
Luxembourg.
If I think of a king at star-fall "Αστγρ πρὶν μεν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ Σωοισιν Ἑωος

In memoriam Ezra Pound

obit first November
nineteen seventy two

Transpontine Ovid made his ovoid obsequies
unto the only emperor, the emperor of ice-cream.
In his elegies Teddy Bear is having picnics.
Can you find four ice-cream cornets hidden
in this elegaic picture? I pasture the pastel
colours of the heart, a part from and partial sense
of lethal elegies hidden in the provinces
of desolation and ice-cream, "the lost land
of Childhood", and the defeated past. Eyes
of a sleeper waked from fantasies (and this
is something more than fantasy) stance of a suicide
above the precipice of emptiness knowing that it must fill:
the fingers find the eyes and type. Take down the book.

Sometimes I think that this is the only thing, the
only stance, first slurp of ice-cream down the throat,
what Krishna meant as when he admonished Arjuna
on the field of battle. Pluck the petal
in the orchard where the factions act on emblematic
colours, red and white; leap with Nijinsky always
poised for entrance in *Le Spectre de la Rose*. This
spectred isle, defying death with gesture. Awhile
to porpoise pause and smile and leap into the past.

He is not here he has outsoared the shadow
of our right. 'Tis life is dead not he. And
ghastly through the drivelling ghosts on the bald
street breaks the blank day of critical interpretation
staining the white radiance of eternity, every
little pimple had a tear in it, a fear of many
coloured glass, the noise of life strains the white
radiance of an elegy. How does the stress fall
on an autumn day. Remember remember the first
of November where history is here and nowhere:
the room in Poictiers where no shadow falls
on the pattern of timeless moments. Forget
the gate of white is the gate wherein our past
is laid. These books are radiant as time
against the shadow of our night where no
shadow falls. He is not dead. Instead.

Give back my swing. O Ferris wheel.

Strike

for Bonnie, my first horse

I

Hail to thee, blithe horse, bird thou never wert!
And, breaking into a canter, I set off on the long road south
Which was to take me to so many strange places,
That room in Cambridge, that room in Cambridge, that room in Cambridge,
That room in Cambridge, this room in Cambridge,
The top of a castle in Provence and an aero-plane in mid-Atlantic.
Strange people, that lover, that lover, that lover, that lover.
Eyes that last I saw in lecture-rooms
Or in the Reading Room of The British Museum, reading, writing,
Reeling, writhing, and typing all night (it's cheaper than getting drunk),
Doing tour en diagonale in ballet class (that's cheaper than getting drunk too).
But first I should describe my mount. His strange colour;
He was lilac with deep purple points (he was really a siamese cat).
His strange toss and whinny which turned my stomach
And nearly threw me out of the saddle. His eyes
His eyes his eyes his eyes his eyes
Eyes that last I saw in lecture rooms
His eyes were hazel brown and deceptively disingenuous.
I got to know those eyes very well.
Our journey through England was not made easier by the fact
That he would eat only strawberries and cream (at any season).
And he wanted a lot of that.
Nevertheless I got here and the first time I ever set foot in the place
I knew it was my home. The trouble was to convince the authorities.
Jobs were scarce and someone with a purple-point siamese to keep
In strawberries and cream has a certain standard of living.
When I sold my rings and stopped buying clothes I knew
It was the end. When I cut down on food it was clear
I was on some sort of quest.
There was an I-have-been-here-before kind of feeling about it.
That hateful cripple with the twisted grin. But
Dauntless the slughorn to my ear I set.

II

How many miles to Babylon?
Threescore and ten.
Can I get there by candlelight?
Yes. But back again?
From perfect leaf there need not be
Petals or even rosemary.
One thing then burnt rests on the tree:
The woodspurge has a cup of three,
One for you, and one for me,
And one for the one we cannot see.

III

What there is now to celebrate:
The only art where failure is renowned.
A local loss
Across and off the platform-ticket found
For the one journey we can tolerate:
To withered fantasy
From stale reality. Father, I cannot tell a lie;
I haven't got the time.
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.
Stainless steel sintered and disowned;
Stars in the brittle distance just on loan.
The timetables of our anxiety glitter, grow
One in the alone. The cosmic ozones know
Our lease is running out.
Deserted now the house of fiction stands
Exams within and driving tests without,
Shading the purpose from the promised lands
No milk our honey.
And the train we catch can't take us yet
To the blind corner where he waits
Between the milk and honey gates:
The god we have not met.

The Lady of Shalott : Ode

The child in the snow has found her mouth,
And estate-agents must beware;
For if what we are seeking is not the truth
And we've only a lie to share,
The modern conveniences won't last out,
Bear tear flair dare,
And the old ones just don't care.

Back and forth she moves her arms;
Forth and back, her legs.
No one would wish to say:
Her lips are red, her looks are free,
Her locks are yellow as gold,
Whether she's very young or old,
The nightmare life-in-death is she,
Who thicks men's blood with cold.

What of the future is in the past
Channels towards us now.
Present and future perfect past
Makes no tracks in the snow.
Turn the tap and water will come
For five seconds
And then the sand
Flows into our ever-open mouth.
What was it we understand?

She does not stand in the snow; she kneels:
A parody of prayer.
Lucretius said it long ago:
Why think the gods care?
When the telephone goes dead,
The fridge is broken, the light . . .

Why should we think of knowledge as light;
There is enough to see her.
And, having seen, the message is plain
To those who wish to know
(They are not many):
Run quickly back to darkness again;
We have seen the child in the snow.

1

Since the seige and assault was ceased in Troy

1 The poet begins his story as he later ends it,
by placing Arthur's reign in historical perspective.
In one hand he holds a Christmas Tree
that is goodliest in green when groves are bare.
First the translation must preserve
the formulaic character of language:
disentangle invention from imitation.
An axe is not like a knife that carves a turkey.
If there be one so wilful my words to assay
Let him leap lightly hither, lay hold of this weapon,
I quitclaim it forever; cranberry sauce is not like blood.
Our snowman is seen out of the window, in candlelight,
he is not a symbol of artifice.
Now lets make some plausible definitions, for example;
Beheading Game: the Dictionary Game, any reiterated
temptation to sever; Snowman: a symbol of artifice,
a kind of ceremonial boomerang; Getting Drunk
on Christmas Night: a wicked work, in words to expound.
We agreed to accept each other's pentangle;
this is called, The Exchange of Winnings.
For it is a figure formed of five points
to be token of truth, like laying the table.

The Temptation

I should have thought you: a squirrel,
hunted from a bird-table by images:
tokens of a non-verbal world, green
knights, rhyme schemes, Morgan le Fay:
signals with flashing lights for eyes
in the cut heads they hold towards you:
mouths full of adjectives and similes.
You would have claimed a kiss by your courtesy,
through some touch or trick of phrase
at some tale's end. You arranged:
the bedroom scene, the woodland scene,
the winter journey, the set table.
I should have held the mirror
for you to adjust your grammar.
At least accept this scrap of green silk,
as a protection from cranberry sauce
and other poetic analogies,
if you be Gawain, which I begin to doubt.

The Exchange of Winnings

"Will you have some more white meat?"

SONNET

My love, if I write a song for you
To that extent you are gone
For, as everyone says, and I know it's true:
We are all always alone.

Never so separate trying to be two
And the busy old fool is right.
To try and finger myself from you
Distinguishes day from night.

If I say 'I love you' we can't but laugh
Since irony knows what we'll say.
If I try to free myself by my craft
You vary as night from day.

So, accept the wish for the deed my dear.
Words were made to prevent us near.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

in memoriam A. C. Swinburne

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action and, till action, lust
Until my last lost taper's end be spent
My sick taper does begin to wink
And, O, many-toned, immortal Aphrodite,
Lend me thy girdle.
You can spare it for an hour or so
Until Zeus has got back his erection.

Here where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams.
The moon is sinking, and the Pleiades,
Mid Night; and time runs on she said,
I lie alone. I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead.
Be my partner and you'll never regret it.
Gods and poets ought to stick together;
They make a strong combination.
So just make him love me again,
You good old triple goddess of tight corners.
And leave me to deal with gloomy Dis.

Death never seems a particularly informative topic for poets
Though that doesn't stop them dilating at length upon it.
But then they would dilate on anything.
Love, on the other hand, however trite, is always interesting
At least to those in its clutches
And usually also to their readers.
For, even if the readers be not in its clutches
They think they would like to be
Because they think it is a pleasant experience.
I, however, know better.
And so do Sappho, Shakespeare, Swinburne, Tennyson and Eliot.
Not to mention the Greek dramatists:
Sophocles, Euripedes, Aeschylos, and Eliot.
We all know better.
Love is hellish.
Which is why Aphrodite is also Persephone,
Queen of love and death.
Love kills people and the police can't do anything to stop it.
Love will:

ravage your beauty
disrupt your career
break up your friendships
squander your energy
spend every last drop of your self-possession

Even supposing you had such qualities to start with.
The god knows why we bother with it.
It is because it bothers with us.
It won't leave us alone for a minute.
For without us it wouldn't exist.
And that is the secret of all human preoccupation
(As others have said before me)
Love, death, time, beauty, the whole bag of tricks.
All our own work including, of course, the gods.
And we let them ride us like the fools we are.
Of all follies that is the penultimate:
To let our own inventions destroy us,
The ultimate folly, of course, is not to let them destroy us.
To pretend a stoic indifference, mask merely of stupidity.
To become ascetic, superior to the pure pleasures of the senses,
Arrogant and imbecile senecans, unconscious
Of what is going on even in their own bodies
Old whatsisname stuck up on his pillar,
A laughing stock, the ultimate in insensitivity.

The only thing, contrarily, to do with the problem of love—
As with all other problems—
Is to try to solve it.
You won't succeed but you won't make a fool of yourself, trying
Or, at least, not so much of a fool as those who refuse to try.
So here we go for another trip and hold on to your seat-beat, Persephone.

I loved you and you loved me
And then we made a mess.
We still loved each other but
We loved each other less.

I got a job, I wrote a book,
I turned again to play.
However I found out by then
That you had gone away.

My dignity dictated
A restrained farewell.
But I love you so much
Dignity can go to hell.

I went to hell with dignity,
For by then, we were three.
And whatever I feel about you,
I certainly hate she.

The god knows what will be the end
And he will never tell.
For I love you and you love me
Although we are in hell.

And what death has to do with it
Is always simply this:
If it isn't your arms I'm heading for
It's the arms of gloomy Dis.

IN MEMORIAM

for W. S. Gilbert

Such is my dream but what am I
An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry

That everything should grow divine
If you and I could see and know
The world in one another so
If you were mine.

If you were mine to see and know,
No limit on this world of thine
Be caused by mine,
Except what you would choose to do.

You choose to do what you do show
You take the world away from mine
And make all thine
Hurting me by slow by slow.

Hurting me by slow by slow
When freedom, truth and skill of mine
Could make us great and strong in thine
I know,

The world could be our own I know
If you gave up the hurt of thine
And made life mine.
Apart from you the dark is mine.

Such is my dream; but what am I
An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry

Such is my dream but what am I
An old acquaintance of the night,
But I could make all darkness light
If you would try.

CANZON

for British Rail Services

Thou hast committed
fornication

Sols sui qui sai lo sobr' afan qe.m sotz

I know I am not the only to suffer the pains of love.
But this I also know: that each who loves thinks so
For myself I can only say,
I doubt if any other
Has suffered more than myself
From this overloved desire.

It is always a wrong move
In the chess game of all we do;
It upsets the sparkling play
Whose light desire does smother;
It destroys all kind of breadth
And plunges a quagmire.

My self is at one remove
Because it has gone to you
Who will not display
The sense of me another,
Being bound in yourself
By my forlorn desire.

Everything goes to show
That those are lucky who
Keep themselves away
From tangling with another
Cold and in themselves
Unlike my absurd desire

I desire to love
You and be loved by you
Who cancel out my play
Being so much another
Being so much yourself
Away from my require.

You check my every move
By being what you will do
And not what I could say
To you, my love, an other.
Suffering more myself
By overlove and desire.

And yet I would not love
If I could chose not to
For I require to play
By hazarding myself
To you, my self, the other
Whom I always desire.

CODA

For
I am Arnaut who drinks the wind
And hunts the hare from the ox
And swims against the stream.

CORDELIA or 'A poem should not mean, but be'

To those who kiss in fear that they shall never kiss again
To those that love with fear that they shall never love again
To such I dedicate this rhyme and what it may contain.
None of us will ever take the transiberian train
Which makes a very satisfactory refrain
Especially as I can repeat it over and over again
Which is the main use of the refrain.

I with no middle flight intend the truth to speak out plain
Of honour truth and love gone by that has come back again
The fact is one grows weary of the love that comes again.
I may not know much about gods but I know that
Eros is a strong purple god.
And that there is a point where incest becomes
Tradition. I don't mean that literally;
I don't love my brother or he me.
We have been mutually avoiding each other
For years and will continue to do so.
Even I know about cross words—
Something. The word you want is Dante.
He said he loved Beatrice. Whatever he did
He didn't love Beatrice. At least the
Beatrice Portinari whom history gives.
He knew her and the point about all these
Florentines is that they all were
Killing each other or dying of rapid
Consumption. Beatrice died; Rossetti painted her
Cutting Dante in the street. Botticelli
Painted the rest: Simonetta Vespucci
Died of a rapid consumption (age 23)
Guliano dei Medici murdered by the altar rail (age 19)
Guido Cavalcanti died in exile (age 35)
Dante dei Aligeri died in exile (age 90)

Lorenzo dei Medici who lives for ever
Since he stayed there and commissioned
The paintings, poems and statues
And if he also commissioned the deaths
I don't blame him. He didn't feel
Very magnificent when his brother
Was murdered in sanctuary.
Do you realise whoever did that
Would be excommunicated if, that is, if
He hadn't also murdered the papal legate,
His best friend.
I have lived long enough having seen one thing;
That term has an end.
It was getting dark on the platform of nowhere
When I who was anxious and sad came to you
Out of the rain. Out of the sound of the cold
Wind that blows time before and time after
Even Provence knows.
And as for this line I stole it from T. S. Eliot
And Ezra Pound and A. C. Swinburne. All very good
Poets to steal from since they are all three dead.
The love that is must always just contain
The glory of the love that was whatever be the pain.
We played at mates and mating and stopped up the drain.
Hear me. O Mister Poster I know
You have burnt me too brown you must boil me again
You simply have no notion how delightful it will
Be when they pick us up and throw us with the lobsters out to sea.
It is the lark, my love, and not the nightingale.
None of us will ever take the trans-siberian train.
She wanted to and was collecting people who did
I thought I did but now I know I don't.
It is the lark, my love, and not the nightingale.
In fact I've never heard either bird
But people say they sound very similar.
And what the devil were Romeo and Juliet
About wasting their last moments
Listening to birds. Hah.
I like kicking up larks or
Larking up kicks. So do most poets
Including J. H. Prynne, the memorable poet
Who is happy to say that the U.L.
Has got his middle name wrong.
He claims it stands for Hah
But there is a limit. I know it all.
Riddle me riddle randy ree
Round and round in the snotgreen sea
When they pick us up and throw us
With the Joyces out to sea.
Tell us tale of Troy's downfall

We all would have liked to have been there.
The infernal Odyssos. He is was whose bile
Stirred up by envy and revenge destroyed
The mother of womankind. And Swinburne
Got a kick out of pain but I don't
I just get kicked.
I wish I didn't keep sounding like Richard the third
Except that if I don't I tend to sound
Like Richard the Second. And who wants that.
I suppose I must sound like Richard the first.
What did he do?
Nothing I take it
I get a kick out of larking up nightingales.
Prynne says that if I don't come back
Safe from Sicily by the thirtieth April
They will send a posse.
March is the cruellest station
Taking on bullying men
And were you really afraid they would rape you?
No. I thought there would be grave difficulties.
Not just that I was actively opposed
And so was every other man, woman and child
On that there train.
I was afraid they would kill me.
I may look stupid but I'm not
So simple as to think your name
Is Elizabeth Brown. Well. All right
My name is Veronica Forrest-Thomson.
Agammemnon was King of the Achaians at the time,
Priam, of the Trojans, Theseus, of the Athenians.
And like all Good Kings, they are dead.
In my day it was the done thing to side
With the Trojans for no better reason
Than that they lost. But me I back
Winners every time.
Mary Shelley may go to hell
As she thought she was going to anyway
And take Frankinsense with her.
I want her husband, alive and well.
Who, of course, also got killed.
Hardly surprising if he made a habit
Of reading Aiscylos while sailing.
He wasn't reading Aiscylos when he drowned.
Got cremated like a pagan king.
Not Agammemnon who, as I said, was king at the time
And lost, murderer of his daughter
Killed by his wife and (other) daughter.
Killed by his death killing his life.
Stabbed in the back in his bath.
I think of it every time I have a bath.

Though I have no sympathy at all
For that daughter and son.
I think it is unfair that Helen
Had everything, immortal beauty,
Lovers, cities destroyed and battles
Fought about her. And she just came home
And calmly went around being Menelaus' wife
While her twin sister, Clytemnestra
Was murdered by her son and daughter.
And the Athenians acquitted them.
They would do, a nation of sophists.
Always betraying their allies and torturing
Women and children and enslaving people.
They even killed Socrates, their one good man,
Then Plato tried to be a philosopher king.
And got enslaved for his pains.
I wish they had kept him enslaved.
He escaped, of course, and wrote books
About how he would do it better
If he was in charge. All poets do that.
They are just as incompetent as the rest
If they try to organise things.
As witness my own efforts in that direction
Or those of my avatar, Agammemnon,
Who, as I say came home and was killed in his bath
Killing his wife and his daughter.
And if you don't know about this you ought to.
Read it in the Iliad, read it in the Odyssey,
Do not read it in Freud who is always wrong
Although even Freud didn't deserve a son like Lacan.
But first and last read me, the beloved
Who was killed in the general slaughter.
But rise again like John Donne
(read him too) I, Helen, I Iseult, I Guenevere,
I Clytemnestra and many more to come.
I did it, I myself, Killing the King my father
Killing the King my mother, joining the King my brother.
It is the kick, my love, and not the nightingale
I like larking up kicks myself
But not kicking.
They have power to hurt and do so
Should not be blamed by Shakespeare or anyone else
For hurting though such is the race of poets
That they will blame them anyway.
However it is a pretty productive process
Especially if one may be plumber as well as poet
And thus unstop the drain as well as writing
Poetic Artifice 'Pain stopped play' and
Several other books and poems including
1974 *and All That* (seriously though)

I, Veronica did it, truth-finding, truth-seeking
Muck-raking, bringing victory.
It was a horse, of course, in which the warriors hid
Pretending to bring peace
And they wouldn't speak to me, crouching in the dark
Like a lot of fools, hearing the voice of the goddess
In an alien city, I speak your tongue in my own city
Cambridge or Camelot and you won't listen to me
Advised, of course, by Odyssos, solicitor, betrayer.
And when they had killed all the men, raped all the women etc.
Agammemnon came home and, as I said, was stabbed by his wife
In his bath. Anyway it is the lark, my love
And not the nightingale. I follow the sacred footsteps of
Hippolyta, the blest, the best
That has been said or spoken well in any tongue
Read John Donne—the memorable dun.
Don't read Matthew Arnold; he's a fool
I am not Prince Thomas Aquinas F. H. Eliot
I am not an attendant lord either.
I am the king who lives.
Spring surprised us, running through the market square
And we stopped in Prynne's rooms in a shower of pain
And went on in sunlight into the University Library
And ate yogurt and talked for an hour.
You, You, grab the reins.
Drink as much as you can and love as much as you can
And work as much as you can
For you can't do anything when you are dead.

The motto of this poem heed
And do you it employ:
Waste not and want not while you're here
The possibles of joy.

Richard II

The wiring appears to be five years old
and is in satisfactory condition.
The insulation resistance is zero.
This reading would be accounted for by the very damp condition of the building.
If you come up the stairs on the left side you will see
A band of dense cumulus massed on the banister.
Whatever you do, do not touch the clouds.
Forever again before after and always

In the light of the quiet night and the dark of the quiet noon
I awoke by a day side and I walked in time's room.
To the end of the long wall and the back of the straight floor
I stepped with my years' clutch and the dark of my days' doom.

For the sight of the deep sad and the swell of the short bright
Bid me flee waste of the time web and the long hand
On a life's weft and the grey warp in the year's cloak
For a long shade laps a short stand.

The terms left right front and rear are used
as if one is standing outside the building
facing the front elevation.
Specialists are carrying mirrors to the bedroom.
They are stacked beneath the window three foot deep.
Whatever you do, do not look in the mirror.
Again before forever after and always

The step to and the step back from the still glass in the long wall
Flung the glance wide from the old field and the brown scene.
And the glance broke at the pale horse on the glass turf
While the door swung where the window should have been.

With the ghosts gone and the wall flat as the clock's tick
With a blood stopped and a bone still I squeezed glue from my cold glove
And I turned back to my smashed self and the few looks pieced my own doll
From the back-lash of the time brick and the last wall of an old love.

In the joinery timbers there is new infestation
And a damp-proof course is urgently needed.
Say a few prayers to the copper wire.
Technicians are placing flowers in the guttering
They are welding the roof to a patch of sky
Whatever you do, do not climb on the roof.
Before forever after again and always.

limpid eyelid

Lemon and Rosemary

for Catherine Cullen

Nobody, I, myself.
Shooting live subjects in pictures sung with imagination and wrung with truth.
Dean knew it was blackmail.

Though my deserted fryingpans lie around me
I do not want to make it cohere.
Hung up to dry for fishing lines on the side of grey wharf of Lethe.
Old, we love each other and know more.

Is this a chisel that I see before me.
If so I want to hack my name on the bedroom door.

A star shines on the hour of our meeting:
Lucifer, son of the morning. And
Thanks for your lighter I have forgotten the matches.

O, why do I hate doctors so?
There was a time some years ago . . .
But do dial one 0 0 0 0

On the best battle fields
No dead bodies

VERONICA FORREST-THOMSON: A PERSONAL MEMOIR

I first met Veronica sometime in 1968 or 69 and we at once disagreed about almost everything. The things we had in common were poems and ways of producing and talking about them, which of course brought in all the rest of human linguistic and other behaviour. We disagreed about the linguistic and about the other, initially in quite violent and protracted ways. Veronica would prowl round to see me, in a manner one might once have termed *outré;* she wore outfits of bright green or uncompromising purple, and hurled arguments about like brickbats. Her reasoning habits were very intense and she locked herself into questions like the conditions for intelligibility of poetic convention as if getting a right answer, or even a workable one, were a condtion for all the details of ordinary life. She would come up against contradictions with a vivid local clarity of insight, quite without that pragmatic relativism of 'keeping things in perspective' which allows ordinary life to be merely ordinary. She wore perfume which would give the most hardened logician the staggers. She was theatrically short-sighted in ways of which she seemed entirely unaware. Her commitment to the writing of poetry was absolute and intrepid, and this commitment was in a vehemently dialectical and changing relation to her writing of poems.

She would not give up either of these purposes, though to have at least subordinated either one to the other would have made her situation easier. Such ease, she saw, would be uninteresting and indeed ignoble. She wanted the empirical matter of poems to stand in working relation to the theoretical matter of poetry and all her work was directed to working out the implications of such a dual purpose.

In the period of our earliest meetings she was anxious to maintain that poetry was a use of language and that its intelligibility could be a special case of rationality in accordance with the grammar of usage. She read Wittgenstein intently and also showed an understandable envy of strictly positivistic models for discourse. Poems, of course, were quite brazenly arbitrary in respect of their surface features, and these features seemed if anything more crucial to their nature as poems than the thematic constructions of sense. She was writing poems at this time which to a certain degree she even resented; she forced on them various ungainly aspects, to test their capacity for survival as poems. Much of this writing appeared in her *twelve academic questions* (Cambridge, privately printed, 1970) and, with some additions, in *Language-Games* (Leeds, 1971).

But already she had also developed a deep admiration for William Empson's work, which she saw to combine its own determined adherence to rational intelligibility with an extremely formal recourse to poetic convention. We argued about this many times, and especially about rhyme. Mostly we disagreed. The idea of rhyme seemed to Veronica, as I understood her position, to lie either above or below the level on which other ideas subsisted in the world of experience: above, in the sense that it was an arbitrary surface feature of poetic expression; below, in the sense that it was a feature intrinsic to language at a phonetic, pre-ideational stage. She wanted to get these two aspects into a relation that would properly (that is, coherently and rationally) contain the space by which they were separated. She would seize upon this space as the precondition for metaphor, as the arena for inventive

fiction itself. But the physical properties of speech always bothered her, and the powerful feelings which forced their way through the lines of her own poems seemed often excessive within her idea of poetry. Irony and irrelevance welled up, and she folded into her writing a deeper and deeper retrospect to the literary tradition of English 'poetry'; an area where poems and their place in a *literature* seemed at least a determined historical fact.

By this time she had removed to the University of Leicester and we met less often; but the last collection she saw into print marked an extraordinary breakthrough. Or so I thought at the time, and still do now. This was *Cordelia; or, 'A poem should not mean, but be'* (Leicester, 1974). Here with an intense force of self-realisation Veronica brought the range of her deepest experience right into the arena of speech. Irony and abandon compete for the final control, which eludes both and comes to uncertain rest in the fullest (i.e., formal) acceptance of passion. The poems muster their resources against this invasion; they suffer and endure it; Swinburne and Tennyson supplant the *Tel Quel* theorists, but the strongest presence is Sappho: Venus attached to her prey.

The intensity of those poems in the very focussed context of that short book is referred more largely to the world in the present collection, *On the Periphery*. All the poems of *Cordelia* are here, some in altered versions, but interspersed with other poems of the same period and some later ones. In consequence of Veronica's death in April 1975 this must comprise the last stage in a short and incomplete but deeply shaped poetic development. Apart from her doctoral dissertation for the University of Cambridge there remains chiefly her as yet unpublished book *Poetic Artifice: A Theory of Twentieth Century Poetry*, which can be expected to develop and extend the final phase of her theoretical understanding already present in nucleus in her "Irrationality and Artifice: A Problem in Recent Poetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 11 (1971), 123–133 and in her concluding "Note" to *Language-Games*.

My personal view is that the poems within this final collection work through this formal notion of artifice to allow into realisation forces she had tacitly been preparing to meet; a new invasion of subject. With great brilliance and courage she set fear against irony and intelligible feeling against the formal irony of its literary anticipations. The theoretic and practical upshot of this achievement could have been profound, and despite her untimely death perhaps it will not be without some consequence in the history of what lies in the future.

Cambridge, April 1976 J. H. PRYNNE

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